

Clark County floods

Clark County's last big flood occurred in February 1996. Extended rainfall and early snowmelt, triggered by an influx of warm, wet weather known as the "Pineapple Express," caused many rivers and creeks to flood.

Overall damage to Clark County businesses, residences and infrastructure was estimated to be roughly \$25 million.

- Approximately 120 businesses had some flood damage.
- Almost 300 homes were damaged, and 82 were destroyed.
- Homes took on water from a few inches to 3 to 4 feet.
- Travel around and outside of the county was almost impossible because of landslide and road closures.
- More 100 county roads and five bridges were damaged.
- Railways were closed in the Lakeshore area.

Most residential evacuations occurred in Woodland, immediately north of Clark County in Cowlitz County. The community was ravaged by flooding from the North Fork of the Lewis River. President Clinton visited Woodland and toured flood-damaged homes in Cowlitz County on Feb. 14, 1996.

Flooding occurred along the Columbia River and other waterways. The average river level for the Columbia River is 7 to 8 feet in winter. On Feb. 9, 1996, the river crested at 27.2 feet, more than 11 feet above its flood stage.

The February 1996 flood was the most recent major flood in county history, but there have been other significant floods during the past 100 years.

In December 1964, heavy snow followed by unusually warm temperatures and torrential rain triggered what became known as the Christmas Flood of 1964, which caused \$430 million in property damage and killed 47 people across a four-state region. The Columbia River crested at 27.7 feet on Dec. 25, 1964.

The river's all-time crest, 31 feet, occurred on June 13, 1948, two weeks after the start of the Vanport Flood. The flood deluged the now-abandoned city of Vanport with as much as 10 feet of water. Vanport, which at the time was Oregon's second largest city, was destroyed and 15 people were killed.

Before accurate records were kept, the Columbia River reached an estimated 34.4 feet during the Great Flood of 1894, which would have caused flooding in much of downtown Vancouver.

More information on the Columbia River and flooding is available at:

www.clark.wa.gov/publicworks/flood/documents/ColumbiaRiverandfloods.pdf.